

“Leave No One Behind” in Action: The G20 Interfaith Forum’s Appeal to the 2024 G20 Summit

May 2024

The world’s religious communities, serving a large majority of the world’s population, contribute to the public good every day. They provide essential services in health and education, support the destitute, work to prevent conflicts and build peace, and offer hope and meaning to countless lives. Their insight, experience, and commitment to human rights and dignity can benefit policy processes at every level of governance, including the topics Brazil has identified as G20 priorities. **Engaging with** religious communities can **improve policy development** and **enhance popular engagement** with policy implementation.

- Brazil, a witness to creative religious collaboration for centuries, is well positioned to incorporate this insight—that **policy engagement with faith communities should be a priority**--into the G20 process.

The central common focus of religious communities worldwide is action and advocacy for and with the most vulnerable, including those forcibly displaced and children. Actions include charitable support, compassionate service, and programs that enhance human and community capabilities—Brazil’s Pastoral da Criança is a prime example. Visions that can help bridge the divides that trouble the world underlie many religious approaches to human welfare and relationships with nature. In 2024, the G20 Interfaith Forum urges priority action on five areas:

- **Food crises.** Religious actors offer untapped potential to strengthen global, national, and local efforts to fight hunger and malnutrition. Assets include teaching and practical actions that address and link urgent hunger needs and their root causes. Faith actors can, for example, be leaders in reducing food waste, investing in local, smallholder farming practices, and supporting nutritional health.
- **Environment.** Finding workable and adequate solutions to climate and other environmental concerns are G20 priorities. The moral and practical voices of religious communities can help bring rainforest protection (vital to natural carbon sequestration) to scale, working with indigenous communities who live there. The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative exemplifies such approaches. Engagement with religious constituencies can also enhance public support for a fair and inclusive energy transition.
- **Peacebuilding.** Failures of trust across institutions and rising hate speech and incitement to violence call for urgent leadership responses. Programs and models like Indonesia’s Cross Cultural Religious Literacy Program and Arigatou International’s Ethics Education demonstrate how education reforms that include strategic religious engagement can help foster social harmony. Strong international leadership support is needed to help G20 members expand and learn from such promising programs. Strategies for dealing with Artificial Intelligence should include engagement of religious actors.
- **Debt relief.** The year 2000 Jubilee Movement calling for urgent action to address debt burdens of poorer countries harnessed the powerful ethical voice of religious communities united around this common cause. As we approach the 2025 Jubilee year and seek to address unsustainable debt burdens and rising demands for reforms of global governance, active and continuing involvement of religious communities in dialogue is essential.
- **Human trafficking and Modern Slavery.** Specific commitments by G20 leaders, supported by the G20 Interfaith Forum, to step up funding against human trafficking (labor, sex trafficking, organ trafficking and other forms) by 2030 would signal renewed commitment to truly “leave no one behind”. The G20 Interfaith Forum proposes to organize and lead a G20 Working Group in support of such a commitment.

The United Nations and G20 calls to “leave no one behind” and achieve the sustainable development goals are seen by too many as empty slogans. The G20 Communique should therefore include specific actions and commitments to priority humanitarian needs (especially for those forcibly displaced) and to address poverty. The G20 Interfaith Forum is committed to fostering continuing and active engagement between policymakers and the G20 interfaith community to assure that those who are excluded and left behind are lifted up with care and compassion.

Expanded analysis and action recommendations related to these five focus areas and other important tissues are available at <https://www.g20interfaith.org/if20-policy-briefs/>."

Background: The G20 Interfaith Forum

June 2024

The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20), since it was established in 2014, has engaged with a diverse and dynamic set of religiously inspired and supported networks that address global policy and practice agendas. It thus aims to serve as a “network of networks”, bringing priority and actionable ideas and experience involving religious communities to the G20 process.

The priority recommendations in IF20’s Appeal to the 2024 G20 Summit draw on input from the IF20’s Advisory Council and Working Groups. They reflect analytic work and a refining of ideas developed over IF20’s ten-year history, including through consultation with the G20 Presidency hosts. Thus, IF20 and its linked organizations engage in continuing debate and exchange on a wide range of issues. The five pillars of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda (Peace, People, Planet, Prosperity, and Partnership) reflect many of the issues on which IF20 networks are focused. In recent years, IF20 has focused sharply on religious responses to the COVID-19 emergencies, food insecurity, and the plight of refugees. The beneficial impact of religious engagement and religious freedom in fostering an environment for effectively addressing many of these issues has been a central theme for several of IF20’s engaged networks.

The IF20 has been actively engaged with the 2024 Brazilian G20 presidency, including through discussions with Brazilian authorities at conferences in Brasilia in August 2023 and Rio de Janeiro in December, 2023. Brazilian leaders also participated in two 2023 events that IF20 organized during India’s G20 Presidency. Other events that enriched understanding and generated proposals for action included meetings in Berlin (with PaRD, Oct. 2023), Kyoto and Tokyo (January 2024), Geneva (March 2024), Washington DC (February 2024), and Addis Ababa (April 2024). Additional meetings are planned for Belem and Manaus, Brazil (June 2024), Jakarta (July 2024), and Brasilia (August 2024). The IF20 has also benefited from participating in a variety of other events contributing to dialogue on key G20 themes.

Every topic on the global agenda, and thus on the agendas of the G20, involves religious communities -- hence, the lengthy list of topics that the IF20 reviews and continues to analyze. Selection of the five priority topics in the Appeal to the 2024 G20 Summit was guided primarily by the Brazilian government’s priorities for its G20 Presidency and our sense of the deep urgency for action in several areas. Thus, food security is listed first as an overarching and central priority. For its part, the IF20 grounds its proposals on its abiding concern for the most vulnerable, and thus its appeal to global leaders to prioritize its oft repeated promise to “leave no one behind.”

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